Invest Saint Paul Initiative (Overview)

The Invest Saint Paul Initiative is an effort to bring together all the necessary and needed stakeholders committed to promoting, supporting and helping people grow viable and sustainable communities. The purpose is to build on the strengths of St. Paul's neighborhoods, by insuring that neighborhoods remain strong and that those neighborhoods where confidence is clearly declining, that we work collaboratively to stimulate changes to restore and build confidence and sustainable pride. This initiative will benefit all neighborhoods in the City. Some neighborhoods will need more services and assistance than others, but in the end, as these neighborhoods get stronger, the City and all of its neighborhoods will become stronger. This will lead to a leveling of calls for more government services and assistance, helping to minimize tax increases.

The overall mission in Invest Saint Paul is to ensure that city government is an effective partner with businesses and residents in improving the quality of life in neighborhoods, and to ensure a measured approach to stakeholders' accountability and improvement. The Mayor, together with his appointed Director of Invest Saint Paul Initiative, will be meeting with state, regional, county agencies, together with the school district, colleges, technical schools, foundations, lenders, faith organizations and cultural organizations to work to identify their assets that help in achieving improvements in the following areas: (1) jobs, workforce and neighborhood economic development; (2) urban environment and transit; (3) education, children, youth and families health; and (4) improved housing, overall quality of life. This will also include identifying new or restructuring existing funding partnerships.

We need to shift the way we think about urban neighborhoods and the treatment of issues. We must start to see neighborhoods on a more holistic approach; it is not one thing that makes a "viable and sustainable neighborhood" but rather a combination of many things, including schools, libraries, recreation centers, structured activities, jobs, religious and cultural participation, good housing, clean and safe streets, good transit, good public infrastructure and more. We must address all of theses at the same time to grow a "viable and sustainable neighborhood". Without all the partners working together on these building blocks, holes are created and many of the neighborhoods and residents fall through wasting the potential of moving the neighborhood to a "viable and sustainable asset" to the City as a whole.

Knowing that those who live, work, play and invest in St. Paul want safe and clean streets, better schools, good housing, good jobs, vibrant commercial corridors, good transportation system and healthy children, they all need to be active stakeholders. This initiative is very different in that we all need to be accountable to identify (1) that we are moving in the right direction; (2) that we know our words and actions are helping create healthy, strong, vibrant and sustainable neighborhoods, and (3) that we develop "performance indicators" that will hold us accountable in taking the pulse of St. Paul neighborhoods by measuring progress toward a shared vision.

This shared vision absolutely cannot just be bricks and mortar activities; it must be a community wide effort. That is where a variety of partners including neighborhood organizations, leaders in the community, churches, and businesses will be needed to move forward a community engagement process which actively engages neighborhood residents and other groups to discuss neighborhood concerns together, and develop improvement strategies and strategies for long term relationship building. This community engagement process collectively builds neighborhood support from the inside with it residents, businesses, etc. that will be in the neighborhood long term to provide the sustainability when issues arise. This process is ongoing as we bring all the parties and issues together.

- 1. providing community facilitators to bring residents together, possibly work through existing neighborhood systems or forming block clubs.
- 2. encouraging churches, neighborhood schools and social service agencies to coordinate programs to assist the focus area residents in strengthening community building skills.
- 3. reaching out to new area residents to participate in community building activities supported by neighborhood organizations.
- 4. being a strong partner with the City in reaching out to national partners in fund raising for this overall initiative

2

PED/HRA - Action Plan

PED over the last few months has been participating and holding meetings with many of the neighborhood cdc's, district councils and other stakeholders. Attached as **Exhibit A** is a listing of items we have received from these meetings and residents noting their concerns. In addition, much information had been gathered concerning the City as a whole (income, jobs, education, housing conditions, vacant bldgs., foreclosures, etc) which assisted in identifying different areas of the City with various needs. PED's participation in the Invest Saint Paul Initiative is to promote the continued opportunities Saint Paul's neighborhoods present for citizens to enjoy sound and stable communities. PED will assist neighborhoods by supporting strategies that improve residential structures, encourage and stabilize existing commercial corridors and neighborhood living environments. PED's implementation of these strategies, in partnership with neighborhood organizations, will support the Mayor's goals of Safe Streets and Safe Homes and Expanding Economic Opportunity.

A list of some of the strategies has been put together over the last few months. Some of these strategies have moved forward and are being instituted (Certificate of Occupancy on ones & two units), while many others are identified in **Exhibit B** and will be developed as we move forward. This initiative is a constant work in progress, strategies will be added and some removed as they are worked through with the partnerships. The strategies will also require collaboration with other City Departments and outside agencies which are needed to improve the success of the initiative. PED has been active in working with the community organizations and residents in the targeting of activities in larger Priority Areas to achieve the identified goals. Financing needs, budget assumptions and number of properties that could be addressed have been preliminarily identified with partners and we are working to finalize these activities, budgets and move to secure approval and subsequent funding (**Exhibit C**).

Work Plan

March, 2006 - January 2007

1. Work with neighborhood groups, currently working on community development activities, to identify smaller neighborhood focus areas undergoing physical distress conditions which include a concentration of vacant buildings, residential improvement need and mortgage foreclosure activity.

February - April 2007

2. Meet with neighborhood community development corporations to develop neighborhood action plans, which will include rehabilitation of residential and commercial property, strategic acquisition, code enforcement for vacant buildings, demolition of deteriorated buildings, and new construction of single family homes when feasible and deconversion of vacant buildings.

Sparc

Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation
East Side Neighborhood Development Corporation
Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services
North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation
Neighborhood Development Alliance
Aurora St. Anthony Community Development Corporation
W. 7th/Fort Road Federation
Selby Area Community Development Corporation

March 2007 - ongoing

- 3. Coordinate with LIEP the identification of vacant houses within the smaller Focus Areas and Priority Areas for immediate attention.
- 4. Identify any potential vacant houses feasible for rehabilitation and deconversion to owner occupied housing.

April 2007 – ongoing

- 5. Develop and implement with the neighborhood cdcs a rehabilitation program for owner occupied single family houses.
- 6. Develop and implement with the neighborhood cdcs a rehabilitation program for rental properties.
- 7. Identify strategic acquisitions of vacant housing as part of future site assembly activities.

March 2007 - ongoing

- 8. Use mortgage programs to assist owners in need of refinancing assistance and provide new owners with opportunities for homeownership.
- 9. Propose federal changes to existing mortgage bond programs to allow for greater flexibility within the Priority Areas to assist current homeowners in danger of foreclosure due to escalating payments.

March 2007 - ongoing

10. Focus and intensify improvement strategies for the neighborhood commercial corridors, to include: rehab and facade improvements, expansion and working capital loans, safety strategies and marketing.

PED will work with:

North End Business Association

Payne-Arcade Business Association

White Bear Business Association

Riverview Economic Development Alliance

Historic St. Paul

North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation

East Side Neighborhood Development Corporation

Phalen Village Business Association

Businesses directly

Non Priority Areas

The targeting of neighborhood improvement strategies should not exclude the participation on non focus area residents. It is proposed that the current city wide programs would service the non focus areas. The continued improvement of residential and commercial properties is important to the vitality of the City. The direct financial resources available through the City may be reduced but will still assist in continuing improvement activities. PED will also be working directly with lenders and other organizations that may be willing to work on bringing additional resources to these areas to even increase the amount of funding availability.